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WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon today announced that the Terrebonne Council on Aging, Inc., will receive a \$4,396,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Section 202 grant will enable the Council to build a 49 unit senior housing complex in Houma.

"The Terrebonne Council on Aging enhances daily life for thousands of seniors in the Parish," said Melancon. "I was proud to be present last August when the Council received an 'Aging Innovations and Achievement Award' from the National Association of Area Agencies. As we rebuild from last year's storms, we must take care to provide for the special needs of our seniors. With this grant, the Council will be able to offer affordable housing for even more seniors."

The new housing complex will be built on an 11 acre property purchased by the Council in 2002. A senior center on the property currently provides meals served in a common area, craft classes, wellness activities and recreational opportunities to senior citizens. The Council serves over 6000 area residents a year through its various facilities.

Diana Edmonson, Executive Director of the Terrebonne Council on Aging, Inc., noted, "After experiencing Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, there's a waiting list for our housing facilities." That waiting list can be as long as two years, so the new complex meets a critical need. "We're really pleased that we will be able to offer safe, affordable housing," said Edmonson. "We plan for all units to be handicapped accessible."

HUD's Section 202 program helps expand the supply of affordable housing with supportive services for the elderly. It provides very low-income seniors with options that allow them to live independently but in an environment that provides support activities such as cleaning, cooking, and transportation. Occupancy is open to any very low-income household comprised of at least one person who is at least 62 years old at the time of initial occupancy.

As the population of seniors increases, the Council hopes to continue to expand its services. "One day we hope to have a park exclusively for seniors," Edmonson concluded. "There we could offer outdoor exercise opportunities and even dances."

Rep. Melancon has been a strong advocate for senior citizens in Congress, particularly working for greater affordability and availability of health care and prescription drugs. During his first term in Congress, he co-sponsored the Medicare's Equitable Drugs for Seniors Act of 2005 (HR 376), which would have helped ensure that seniors enrolled in Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D prescription drug plans pay the lowest possible price for prescriptions. He also co-sponsored the Medicare Informed Choice Act of 2005 (HR 3861), which would have extended open enrollment for Medicare Part D through 2006 without penalty and allowed a one time prescription plan change in 2006.

Melancon has also worked to assist senior citizens register for the new Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit. Today, approximately 88 percent of Louisiana's Medicare beneficiaries have prescription drug coverage, 334,600 of these having gained new coverage through Medicare Part D, according to final-enrollment numbers recently released by the federal government. For Rep. Melancon's continuous efforts to make prescription drug coverage more affordable for seniors, he was publicly honored in August by the Louisiana Health Access Network. The Network credited the leadership of Louisiana's congressional delegation, and Congressman Melancon's work in particular, as a major reason why enrollment has exceeded expectations.

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